LONDON LITERARY LION ONCE SALOON BOUNCER

Famous Poet and Playwright Served Drinks and Scoured Brass at Old Colonial Hotel in This City

Hailed as a New Walt Whitman With No Literary Axe to Grind and No Radical Opinions to Spread

The bold mortal who in London of to-day would disclaim any acquaintance with anything Masefield ever wrote would incur ostracism, social and literary, as rigorous, as deadly as a Bostonian would have incurred ten years ago had he shown hesitancy in quoting Henry James.

The fate of the Texan who queried once, "What are Howells," would be bliss compared to what they would do to any one not conversant with Masefield's biography.

Ten years ago to-day's lion of letters was rinsing glasses and bouncing overlively topers in a Sixth avenue saloon. The man whose poems are regardless of their length featured by the stodgiest of London periodicals never went to school. This great psychologist and dissector in chief of feminine souls sailed before the mast at 14, and favors in his verse the short and snappy vocabulary which gives King James's Bible and sailors' discourses their characteristic flavor.

Galsworthy, the courteous, the refined, the gentlemanly, goes about proclaiming very frankly that John Masefield is the man of the hour (and the man of to-morrow, too) in poetry and in the playwriting craft. He gives more for the "Tragedy of Nan," he says, than for any play written within these past ten years. So there.

Thirty-eight years ago John Masefield was born in Shropshire of English parents. He was a clever boy whose pet aversion was schools and books. He also had a trick of starting on long and unpremeditated tramps without giving sufficient notice to his family. And his family felt so keenly the responsibility which attached to bringing up a young individualist of that ilk that the responsibility found itself very soon shifted onto other shoulders.

The captain of a merchant vessel was, in consideration of a shilling a month, or was it only sixpence, entitled to the services of Johnny boy, who had then just crossed the fourteen year mark. The seven seas knew him for several years. Then, sick and tired of the sea, he took to the land and tramped and tramped, then sailed some more and then tramped again.

During that roving, lazy, somewhat Whitmanesque youth he now and then would dash off lines with an almost Whitmanesque breath. Witness his ballad of London town.

Oh, London Town's a fine town, and London's sights are rare,
And London ale is right ale, and brisk's the London air,
And busily goes the world there, but crafty grows the mind,
And London Town of all towns I'm glad to leave behind.

Then hey for croft and hop yard, and hill, field and pond,
With Bredon Hill before me and Malvern Hill beyond,
The hawthorn white i' the hedgerow, and all the spring's attire
In the comely land of Teme and Lugg and Clent and Clee and Wyre.

Oh, London girls are brave girls, in silk and cloth o' gold,
And London shops are rare shops, where gallant things are sold,
And bonnily clinks the gold there, but drowsily blinks the eye,
And London Town of all towns I'm glad to hurry by.

Then hey for covert and woodland and ash and elm and oak,
Tewkesbury inns and Malvern roofs, and Worcester chimney smoke,
The apple trees in the orchard, the cattle in the byre,
And all the land from Ludlow town to Bredon church's spire.

Oh, London tunes are new tunes, and London books are wise,
And London plays are rare plays and fine to country eyes,
But craftily fares the knave there, and wickedly fares the Jew,
And London Town of all towns I'm glad to hurry through.

So hey for the road, the west road, by mill and forge and fold,
Scent of the fern and song of the lark by brook and field and wold,
To the comely fold at the hearthstone and the talk beside the fire,
In the hearty land, where I was bred, my land of heart's desire.

One day he met a man who was to exert upon his life and destinies a potent influence for good, Jack B. Yeats. Both spent some time together in Devonshire in the spot that may go down to posterity as a historical landmark at the mouth of the Gara River. Jack B. Yeats has since purchased in that historic location Snail Castle, so called, he says, on account of the predilection gasteropods show for its thatched roof.

A whole summer Masefield and Yeats spent there loafing, talking and indulging in a sport which from a grownup's point of view appears rather "tame" when indulged in by other grownups. They built little boats and sailed them down the Gara River. The Gara River is at its greatest width about four feet from shore to shore and its greatest depth is never over two feet.

The boats were all the way from ten inches to one yard in length and the two sillies topped the silliness of this pastime by writing quite scientific descriptions of their fleet accompanied by drawings, diagrams and charts and, now and then, a few stanzas due to the pen of the fleet's poet, Masefield.

We reproduce two pages of that treatise called "A Little Fleet." The left hand side drawing shows the fast vessel of the fleet, the Monte, which "had a stone underneath her to keep her upright and a piece of string tied round her amidship to keep on the stone." She once hit a rock and then * * *

The right hand drawing represents the Moby Dick, constructed as scientifically as the Monte and fourteen inches long.

Those toy ships caused Masefield, then 27 or 28, to yearn for the sight of real ships and his next voyage took him to America. He tried his hand at many things and failed in every one of them. He finally found himself stranded in New York at the beginning of a sultry summer.

Two friends, in the same desperate straits, were at that time sharing a garret in Greenwich Village, where he joined them. For several days they lived on doughnuts and on the sandwiches of the free lunch counters, while they tramped about the city looking for work. Masefield used to call at livery stables, little eating houses, bucket shops, factories, bakeries and general stores, offering his services at rates which none might call exorbitant. Perhaps he seemed too boyish for employment, for he always looked very young, and perhaps people shunned him for the uncouthness of his appearance. He was burned to a dull brick color by the sun, for he had passed two months as a common laborer on a farm. He wore the red shirt and the dungarees of the sailor, and an old slouch hat with a broken brim. Those to whom he applied for work were sometimes kind, sometimes rude. But whether they were rude or kind, they refused, one and all, to have anything to do with him.

His friends fared as he fared, so that in ten days time their condition was almost desperate. "We reduced our expenses to tenpence a day among the three of us," he wrote to a friend in London. "We did our own washing and dried it out of the window. One of us slept each night on the floor upon a pile of newspapers, with a coat for a pillow. Once or twice a week we went to the Eighth avenue pawnshops or to a clothes store in Bleecker street, where we raised money on our gear, to enable us to buy tobacco or an occasional egg. Once we sallied out and sang songs in the street, but it came on to rain and we were all soaked through before the citizens had had time to get out an injunction."

They were living in this way when Masefield's good star sent him to the Colonial Hotel on Sixth avenue, which has since been torn down. He was in the habit of going there at lunch time, for those who bought a glass of beer at the bar were entitled to a free lunch and a sight of the papers. He relates his experience there:

"The proprietor, a small pale man in a tweed suit, Panama hat and tan boots, came over to me and began a conversation. 'Say,' he said, speaking slowly, 'do you want a good job?' I said I did. 'Well,' he said, 'I want you to help behind the bar here. Here's a dollar bill; go over to Lee's there an' have a hair cut. I'll fix you up with aprons. I'll give you $10 a month and your board and room and you kin start in right away.

"When my hair had been clipped I returned to Luke O'Donnell, the hotel proprietor. He brought out a white jacket and an apron, bade me put them on and then sent me behind the bar to clean glasses. There were two other bartenders, one named Johnny, a little merry man with a dark complexion; the other named John, an elderly stout man with a fat red head and a continual smile. My duties were to clean the glasses which these two artists filled for the thirsty. I, who was not an artist and could not mix the subtle drinks in vogue, might only serve beer and cigars. If necessary I had to take a tray laden with curious drinks to men living in the hotel or loafing at the bar tables reading the papers.

"I had to see that the piping through which the beer ran to the taps was kept packed in ice. I had to keep the bar icebox filled from the cold storage cellar. I had to keep the free lunch counter supplied with food, such as pretzels, sliced bologna sausage, sardines, salt beef, rye bread and potato salad. Twice a week I had to take down the electric light shades, which were of a pinky blue porcelain, to wash them carefully with soap and water. My meals I ate with the proprietor's family at his flat some half a mile away. I slept in a garret in the hotel, right at the top in a queer little room with an ant's nest in the wainscot.

"My day began at 10 A. M., when John-a, the Italian lunch man, banged at my door, singing a lyric which he had composed in my honor. It ran:

John-a, get your gon-a, gon-a, gon-a;
John-a, get your gon-a, 'Eep 'ooray.

"I then dressed myself and walked to the flat for breakfast, returning to the hotel about 11. I put on an apron and a black alpaca coat and set to work to polish the brass work on the doors and bar. A thick brass footrail ran along the bar, and it was my pride to make this footrail to glow like refined gold. When I had polished this rail and the various door handles I brightened up the beer taps and the decorative brass behind the bar. I then filled the icebox and packed the beer pipes with broken ice. Then I took some money from the bartenders and went shopping. I bought strawberries, cherries, limes, pineapples, lemons, nutmeg, sifted sugar, and bottles of milk, for the concoction of subtle punches, cocktails, fizzes and slings. Sometimes I bought eggs for nogs and fizzes and beat up the whites in a saucer ready for use. I then filled a little silver stand with coffee, berries, cachous and chocolate drops for those hypocritical topers who wished to hide the smell of the whiskey they had drunk. I took a handful of cedarwood spills and placed them in a silver box beside the little silver spirit lamp which burned always for smokers desiring a light.

"After finishing this routine work I put on a white coat and cleaned glasses behind the bar, pausing each moment to dry the bar with a duster, for every glass placed upon it left a wet ring on the polished wood. Every now and then I had to run upstairs to answer the electric bell, for the men lodging in the house were a sad set of drunkards, and needed pick-me-ups before they could face the day's work. By this time it would be 2 or 3 in the afternoon. I never had time to go out for lunch, so that my mid day meal was taken from the free lunch counter and eaten, as it were, with my loins girded, for I was nearly always interrupted by the ringing of a bell.

"In the afternoons I squeezed lemons with a patent squeezer which was fixed to the end of the bar. The juice ran into a demijohn, which we kept on ice. We filled old whiskey bottles from this demijohn, and kept those bottles ready to the bartender's hand in a zinc rack below the beer taps. Lemon juice was largely used in that saloon, for 'whiskey sours' and 'Long John Collinses' were the most popular drinks we made. Sometimes in the afternoons I had to clean the bar windows or the great mirrors at the back of the saloon. At other times, if the customers were many, I spent hour after hour mopping the bar, cleaning glasses, filling the beer pipe box with ice, or sweeping the cigar ends from the floor. My supper was a movable feast, to be eaten at 6 or 8, at the proprietor's home, according to the stress or laxity of custom.

"After supper the saloon was always full, a curious gang of topers coming in about 9 P. M. and staying till we closed, drinking, singing and telling tales of wonder. I was always busy after supper, for even if the bar was quiet the men upstairs would be requiring drinks. There was no lift to the hotel, and the constant running upstairs was excellent exercise. I never had better health than I had then. Sometimes there would be brawls in the hotel, either in the saloon or in the bedrooms. I had to separate all combatants (that was one of my duties), yet the separation had to be done so subtly that no good client should have cause for withdrawing his custom."

At times the gentle and kindly Masefield would have his hands full making the intemperate behave. To one of those incidents we owe this picturesque scene. A young man called Mac, who lived above the saloon, started a fight.

"Six of us, using our collective strength, prepared to put him to bed. We could not offer him the indignity of bonds, so that the result was like football under Queensberry rules. Sometimes we had him. Sometimes he had us. Sometimes he was like a sail being furled, or a rope being tautened, or a cart being driven to market. At other times he was a whirlpool, and we the shipwrecks; a battery, and we the target; a boa constrictor, and we the timid deer. It was a royal, rapturous and ringing battle, but we were the conquerors in the end. We carried him, in a fashion, from the bar, but as we passed the swing doors he kicked their glass to atoms and brought us all down upon the wreck.

"We were a collarless, dusty, dirty gang by the time we brought him to his room; but he in his splendid strength was yelling and kicking as freshly as when the fight began. Once in his room he made a rally which sent us to the carpet. He fought like a young Viking who had learned jiu-jitsu and the savate. Then, as at last we flung him on the bed, he lay still a moment.

"'Let me up, boys: let me up!' he moaned. 'I've had enough. What's the use of fighting?'

"'Will you be good if we let you up?' we asked.

"'I will, boys,' he said. 'I'm through. So let me up and be friends.'

"At 1 o'clock we closed (at any rate to the police), and windows and doors were effectually barred and shuttered. I then scrubbed the bar with a hand scrubbing brush. I cleaned the zinc below the bar with sapolio. I rolled up the rubber mats upon the floor, and swept underneath them, often finding coins which the topers had dropped. I cleaned the tables and cuspidors, and then ran across the avenue to buy some sandwiches for the bartender's supper. At about 2 or 2:30 A. M. I took a tot of whiskey and went to my garret, where I read the 'Morte d'Arthur,' my only book, until I fell asleep."

Gone is the old Colonial Hotel. Barkeepers and real estate men of the neighborhood do not remember it without an effort of the memory. And one of the furnished room houses where Masefield spent uncomfortable nights after breakfastless and dinnerless days will soon follow the Colonial Hotel into oblivion. The wrecker's pick will soon obliterate one of the last landmarks to which Masefield's devotees may some day organize pilgrimages. The only shrine of worship left to them will be the benches in Christopher Street Park, a slip of unbuilt ground, shaded by a couple of trees and especially by the surrounding houses. There Masefield repaired of evenings when the summer heat and the fear of encountering an irate landlady fostered in him a sudden interest in astronomy.

After several months of that life, which from a financial point of view was not very profitable, but which enlarged greatly his store of experience and broadened his views on life and the human animal, Masefield returned to England.

The friend with whom he had once launched the stone keeled 'Monte' and the fierce looking 'Moby Dick' prevailed upon him to pause a little and to describe for the benefit of the public his adventures on land and sea. This led to some more or less regular hack work, which led to marriage, which led to more regular work, and the tramp settled down.

Thirty-eight years old and the father of two children, he has probably recovered from his acute and seemingly chronic attacks of wanderlust. And strangely enough London is lionizing him. I say strangely, not because I disapprove of this sudden Masefield craze, but because he seems to be writing the very stuff which in the parlance of editorial chambers "the public does not want."

His novels, the best known of which are "The Street of To-day" and "Multitude and Solitude," are frankly pessimistic and, to summer readers, at least, depressing. "The Tragedy of Nan" ends with one ptomaine poisoning, one murder and one suicide; "Mrs. Harrison," another striking play of his, ends with a suicide by poison. "The Everlasting Mercy," a long winded poem of eighty-four pages, records the grossest dissipations of a saloon habitué, who in the end is converted by a Quakeress.

Finally "The Widow in the Bye Street" is the story of a journeyman who kills a shepherd when catching him with a rather dissolute person he was courting.

And the brutality with which our author expresses himself is simply amazing: I am not sure that our great "St. Anthony" will not have some day the works of Masefield debarred from the mails. Postmaster Toby of Boston had Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" tabooed officially for lines that were less daring than certain phrases found in "The Widow of Bye Street."

Somehow it is hard not to think of Whitman while reading Masefield. Masefield is generally faithful to the traditional form, but now and then he breaks out into Whitmanesque amorphism for the sake of more realism. The following is supposed to be poetry:

Mother—You're late, and this yer isn't good,
What makes you come in late like this?
Jimmy—I've been to Plaister's End, that's how it is.
Mother—You've been to Plaister's End?
Jimmy—Yes.
Mother—I've been staying
For money for the shopping ever so
Down here we can't get victuals without paying,
There's no trust down the Bye Street, as you know,
And now it's dark and it's too late to go.
You've been to Plaister's End. What tooke you there?
Jimmy—The lady who was with us at the fair.
Mother—The lady, eh? The lady?
Jimmy—Yes, the lady.
Mother—You've been to see her?
Jimmy—Yes.
Mother—What happened?
Jimmy—I saw her.
Mother—Yes. And what filth did she trade ye?
Or d'you expect your locket back again?
What did it cost ye?
Jimmy—What did it cost?
Mother—It
Your devil's penny for the devil's bit.

Barring his novels, which are not his best work, all his characters are drawn from the laboring classes. From his cruises to many ports and his tramps through many villages Masefield gained a singular mastery of the popular vocabulary. His farmers, his sailors, his journeymen never let the clever impersonator show through his disguise. There is no disguise.

Jimmy, the hero of "The Widow of Bye Street," is not an actor dressed up as a journeyman:

"He got a job at working on the line
Tipping the earth down, trolley after truck,
From daylight till the evening, wet or fine,
With arms all red from wallowing in the muck,
And spitting, as the trolley tipped, for luck,
And singing 'Binger' as he swung the pick
Because the red blood ran in him so quick."

Take "The Tragedy of Nan." The scene is laid in the house of a small farmer at Broad Oak on Severn in the year 1810. In those days English law still allowed a death sentence to be inflicted upon the flimsiest evidence and for the most trifling misdeed. Nan Hardwick's father had just been hanged for sheep stealing. Nan, a beautiful young girl, is living with her uncle, Farmer Pargetter, kind of heart but very weak. His wife, a cruel shrew, and his daughter, Jennie, a shallow, empty headed creature, take turns in making Nan's life unendurable. Jennie is in love with a village swain called Dick Gurvil. Dick, in the course of a peasant festivity, proposes to Nan. She joyfully accepts him. Dick, however, has some misgivings because he does not know anything about Nan's father. Very cleverly Mrs. Pargetter manages to reveal to him what he didn't know and to frighten him into announcing that very night his engagement to Jennie. This he does for very practical reasons, being led to believe that farmer Pargetter will be rather liberal toward his son-in-law.

In the third act officers of the Crown come to offer Nan the realm's apology and £50 compensation. Her father had gone to his death owing to a miscarriage of justice.

And the ever practical Dick Gurvil would be perfectly willing to forsake Jennie once more in order to win Nan's "treasure." In a frenzy of indignation Nan stabs him and then goes to throw herself into the sea.

Primitive passion, primitive love, primitive greed and also primitive poetry.

In the last act a poor old fiddler, mentally unbalanced, Gaffer Pearce, and heartbroken Nan exchange mysterious words about the tide which is rising in the moonlit night. With the simplest, crudest terms at the disposal of rude country folks they draw a wonderful picture.

Gaffer—First there come a-wammerin' and a-wammerin'. Miles away that wammerin' be. In the sea. The shipmen do cross theirselves. And it come up. It come nearer. Wammerin', wammerin'! 'Ush, it says. 'Ush, it says. 'Ush, it says. And ther come a girt wash of it over the rock. White. White. Like a bird. Like a swan a-gettin' up out of a pool.

Nan—Bright it goes. High. High up. Flashing.

Gaffer—And it wammers and it bubbles. And then it spreads. It goes out like soldiers. It go out into a line. It curls. It curls. It go toppling and toppling. And on it come. And on it come.

Nan—Fast. Fast. A black line. And the foam all creamin' on it.

Gaffer—It be a snake. A snake. A girt water snake with its 'ed up. Swimming. On it come.

Nan—A bright crown upon it. And hungry.

Gaffer—With a rush. With a roar. And its claws clutchin' at you. Out they go at the sides, the claws do.

Nan—The claws of the tide.

Gaffer—Singing. Singing. And the sea a-roaring after. O, it takes them. They stand out in the river. And it goes over them. Over them. Over them. One roarin' rush.

Nan—Deep. Deep. Water in their eyes. Over their hair. And to-night it be the harvest tide.

Gaffer (as though waking from a dream)—The salmon-fishers 'll lose thir nets to-night.

The tide 'll sweep them away. O! I've known it. It takes the nets up miles. They find 'em high up. Beyong Glorster. Beyong 'Artpury. Girt golden flag-flowers over 'em. Apples of red and apples of gold. They fall into the water. The water be still there, where the apples fall. The nets 'ave apples in them.

Nan—And fish, Gaffer?

Gaffer—Strange fish. Strange fish out of the sea.

Nan—Yes. Strange fish, indeed, Gaffer. A strange fish in the nets to-morrow. A dumb thing. Knocking agen the bridges. Something white. Something white in the water. They'd pull me out. Men would. They'd touch my body. (Shuddering) I couldn't. I couldn't.

For honest realism and lyricism expressed in the most commonplace words read the dialogue between Nan and Dick:

Nan—It be always 'ard for a man to give up, even for a child, they say. But a woman 'as to give up. You don't know. You never think per'aps what a woman gives up. She gives up 'er beauty and 'er peace. She gives up 'er share of joy in the world. All to bear a little one; as per'aps 'll not give 'er bread when 'er be wold.

Dick—I wonder women ever want to 'ave children. They be so beautiful avore they 'ave children. They 'ave red cheeks, so soft. And sweet lips so red's red. And their eyes bright, like stars a-shining. And od, such white soft 'ands. Touch one of 'em, and you 'ave like shoots all down. Beau-ti-vul. Love-lee.

Nan—It be a proud thing to 'ave beauty to raise love in a man.

A year ago "The Everlasting Mercy" gave a rude shock to those who had weathered the stormwind of realism let loose in the "Tragedy of Nan."

Saul Kane, the leading character of this dramatic poem, a poacher and village loafer, introduces himself to the public in the following fashion:

"From '41 to '51
I was my folk's contrary son;
I bit my father's hand right through
And broke my mother's heart in two.
I sometimes go without my dinner
Now that I know the times I've gin her.

From '51 to '61
I cut my teeth and took to fun.
I learned what not to be afraid of
And what stuff women's lips are made of;
I learned with what a rosy feeling
Good ale makes floors seem like the ceiling,
And how the moon gives shiny light
To lads as roll home singing by't.
My blood did leap, my flesh did revel,
Saul Kane was tokened to the devil.

Saul Kane and Billy Meyers have an argument one night when both wish to poach in the same patch of woods:

"Now when he saw me set my snare,
He tells me 'Get to hell from there.
This field is mine,' he says, 'by right;
If you poach here, there'll be a fight.
Out now,' he says, 'and leave your wire;
It's mine.'
"It ain't."
"You put."
"You liar."
"You closhy put."
"You bloody liar."
"This is my field."
"This is my wire."
"I'm ruler here."
"You ain't."
"I am."
"I'll fight you for it."
"Right, by damn."
"Not now though, I've a-sprained my thumb,
We'll fight after the harvest hum.
And Silas Jones, that cookie wife,
Will make a purse five pounds a side."

And we are treated to a description of a prizefight which outJackLondons even Jack London's own "Piece of Steak."

Saul Kane knocks out his opponent and takes all the hangers-on of the fighting rink to the Lion for a "night of it." And a night of it they have. At the end of the orgy:

"From three long hours of gin and smokes,
And two girls' breath and fifteen blokes,
* * * * * * * *
The heat and smell and drinking deep
Began to stun the gang to sleep
Some fell downstairs to sleep on the mat,
Some snored it sodden where they sat.
Dick Twot had lost a tooth and wept,
But all the drunken others slept."
* * * * * * * *

Masefield, who can paint filth with a brush as masterly as Zola's, rises immediately after to wonderful heights of lyricism without ever using a word which smacks of literature.

One night at closing time a pale, little Quakeress enters the bar and empties Kane's gin on the floor, begging him to remember:

"That every drop of drink accursed
Makes Christ within you die of thirst,
That every dirty word you say
Is one more flint upon His way,
Another thorn about His head,
Another mock by where He tread,
Another nail, another cross,
All that you are is that Christ's loss."

The clock run down and struck a chime
And Mrs. Si said, "Closing time."
The wet was pelting on the pane
And something broke inside my brain,
I heard the rain drip from the gutters
And Silas putting up the shutters,
While one by one the drinkers went:
I got a glimpse of what it meant,
How she and I had stood before
In some old town by some old door
Waiting intent while some one knocked
Before the door forever locked;
She was so white that I was scared,
A gas jet, turned the wrong way, flared,
And Silas snapped the bars in place.
Miss Bourne stood white and searched my face.
When Silas done, with ends of tunes
He 'gan a-gathering the spittoons,
His wife primmed lips and took the till.
Miss Bourne stood still and I stood still,
And "Tick, Slow. Tick. Slow" went the clock.
She said, "He waits until you knock,"
She turned at that and went out swift,
Si grinned and winked, his missus sniffed."

The next morning the brutishness of the boxing club, the feast of filth at the Lion, the gin of Si's barroom, are all wiped off his soul. Saul Kane hasn't become a saint, but he has now an eye for the real world and its beauty.

"I heard a partridge covey call,
The morning sun was bright on all.
Down the long slope the plough team drove
The tossing rooks arose and hove.
A stone struck on the share. A word
Came to the team. The red earth stirred.
I crossed the hedge by shooter's gap,
I hitched my boxer's belt a strap,
I jumped the ditch and crossed the fallow:
I took the hales from farmer Callow."

The cast of characters in "The Widow in the Bye Street," a sort of popular epic in about two thousand lines, shows once more Masefield's predilection for rustic heroes. Here is Jim Gurney, the journeyman, already introduced to the reader. His mother, with her withered eyes below her lashes, eyelids red and bleared, who makes a living by sewing for an undertaker. Shepherd Ern, "a moody, treacherous man of bawdy mind." Bessie, the gipsy. Finally Anna, the cause of all the mischief.

The poem appeared in the *English Review* on February 1 and seems to have added the final touch to Masefield's halo. Radicals and conservatives alike agree on calling him great. One reason may be that in not one of his books did he ever try to solve a problem nor to settle social questions.

His gift of sympathy for the lowly, his perfect understanding of the toiler, makes him persona grata with the friends of labor. Conservatives cannot suspect him as they do Shaw, Wells and Galsworthy of encouraging dark schemes for the reshaping of present society. Masefield goes along taking snapshots but drawing no conclusions. His workers have their troubles, their tragedies, big and little, but they are not "class conscious," not one of them. Jimmy and his mother never bothered about political economy.

So there was bacon then, at night, for supper
In Bye street there, where he and mother stay;
And boots they had, not leaky in the upper,
And room rent ready on the settling day;
And beer for poor old mother, worn and gray,
And fire in frost: and in the widow's eyes
It seemed the Lord had made earth paradise.

And there they sat of evenings after dark
Singing their song of "Binger," he and she,
Her poor old cackle made the mongrels bark,
And "you sing 'Binger,' mother," carols he;
"By crimes, but that's a good song, that her be;"
And then they slept there in the room they shared,
And all the time fate had his end prepared.

Anna, the village enchantress, soon breaks up this happy home. When her lover, Shepherd Ern, forsakes her for Bessie, the gipsy, she entices Jimmy away from his mother. Jimmy no longer brings his pay home. He buys silver trinkets for his fair lady, until one night, watching jealously her house, he surprises her with Shepherd Ern. With a plough bat Jimmy lays his rival low. And then they hang him. And the old widowed mother:

She tottered home, back to the little room,
It was all over for her but for life.
She drew the blinds and trembled in the gloom
And slowly sorrow obliterates all thought from her grieving mind.
And sometimes she will walk the cindery mile
Singing, as she and Jimmy used to do,
And in the sunny dawns of hot Julys
The laborers going to meadow see her there.
Dully they watch her, then they turn to go
To that high Shropshire upland of late hay.
Her singing lingers with them as they mow,
And many times they try it, now grave, now gay,
Till, with full throat, over the hills away,
They lift it clear; oh, very clear it towers,
Mixed with the swish of many falling flowers.

English writers of to-day could be thus far classified rather simply. On one side those who draw upon their imagination and upon the romance of the past; on the other side the social philosophers who photograph modern conditions with more or less dispassionate fidelity. Under neither of these heads could we fittingly catalogue Masefield. Masefield seems to be mostly Masefield. Hence perhaps his sudden jump into fame. Four years have done it, for his first book did not see the light of print until 1908.